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President Smith's Interview

The time is rapidly passing, if it has not already passed, when a few scalawags of which this state has had more than its quota, can scourge a whole people. In Utah for many years, we have been afflicted with numbers of those scalawags, who for selfish and mercenary reasons, wilfully wickedly and with malice aforethought have maligned, misrepresented, slandered and lied about Utah and her people, particularly the Mormon portion of the people. They have taken advantage of the prejudice which exists against the Mormons to paint them blacker than any three black crows. There are those destitute of honor or common decency who practiced extortion, a species of blackmail on the people of Utah. Some wanted money, others wanted political preferment. When denied either or both, they raised a hue-and-cry east, west, north and south against the Mormons told all kinds of false and dastardly stories about them to the outside world, and because of the prejudice against the Mormons those traducers obtained credence and were accorded sympathy and financial assistance, the latter being especially to their liking. The Mormons being comparatively few in numbers and under a dark cloud were in no position to gain a hearing, they could neither effectually refute the slanders and abuses heaped upon them or assert their just rights in a way which counted for anything. The Mormons have been in the position of the under dog in an unequal fight. The ministers of the gospel, the gamblers, the grafters, the dispensers of liquid damnation, the disappointed politicians all combined and made common cause against the Mormons. They were and are considered legitimate prey, because they are weak and discredited. The ministers make money, fat and easy livings, by decrying the Mormons. The politicians and the place hunters, when their schemes, however wicked and nefarious, go aglee, vent their spleen against the Mormons. That's what the Tribune triumvirate, Kearns, Cannon and Lippman are doing now. They tell in their papers and privately the blackest lies about the Mormons, because the Mormons would not keep Kearns and Cannon United States

senators and Lippman "chief cook and bottle washer." To satisfy their thirst for vengeance they injure the whole state and the whole people, Mormon and Gentile alike. They formed a band of knockers which they lead through filth, mire and corruption. They misrepresent the state, its business, its social, moral and religious conditions, they wilfully and maliciously lie about it and defame it in their newspaper organs, and in every other way they can. A more corrupt, a more foul gang does not exist anywhere than the knocking triumvirate, Kearns, Cannon and Lippman. Their actions public and private, smell to heaven, and with this gang some of the preachers join hands and help spread the poison which has blighted the fair land of Utah. Their time, however, is short, their days are numbered the hand writing is on the wall in large letters. Utah is rising triumphant above them all and her defamers are sinking into the hades they have prepared for themselves.

A statement made by the head of the Mormon church recently to Henry Hall, an accredited representative of the Pittsburg, Pa. Times, and published in that paper gives a clear and truthful statement of the business and politico-religious conditions as they exist here. It has not been reproduced in any of the daily papers here for reasons that are obvious. It contradicts all they have been publishing. It is a lengthy article, but is good and interesting reading and true to the facts. It reads as follows:

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not direct, nor attempt to direct, who shall or shall not be elected to any office, high or low, in the State of Utah. With regard to the charge, continually and persistently made, that Apostle Reed Smoot was the Church candidate, and that by Church dictation and through Church domination in politics, he was elected to the United States Senate, I want to say to you, in the presence of these three gentlemen, who had full knowledge of all the circumstances, that I had no more to do with his election, nor had they, than you, living in Pennsylvania, had, except that at

the polls I may have voted for members of the Legislature who in turn supported him in the joint legislative convention for that office."

This positive, unequivocal statement was made to The Times correspondent by President Joseph F. Smith, of the Mormon Church. The three men whom he called as witnesses were Presidents John R. Winder and Anthon H. Lund, his colleagues in the highest office of the Church and Apostle Charles W. Penrose, one of "the Twelve," and editor of the "Deseret News," the official organ of Mormonism.

"And if you ordered us to vote for Reed Smoot," said President Winder, with a broad smile, "there are two of us here who flatly disobeyed you, for Brother Penrose and I are Democrats, and I certainly didn't vote for Republican candidates for the Legislature who voted for Smoot for Senator."

"Neither did I," declared Apostle Penrose. "I voted for the Democratic candidates."

"There, you see how Mormons are divided politically," said President Smith. "Here are four of us together, and two are Democrats, one my counselor and associate in the first presidency, and the other an Apostle of the Church. That ought to show how little there is in the charge that Mormons vote as they are told to vote by the Church officials."

"Mormons are like other citizens of the United States," said President Lund. "They are divided politically. I think the division is about an equal one, and those who are Democrats voted against Apostle Smoot."

"I will say further," continued President Smith, "that Reed Smoot no more represents the First Presidency, the apostolate, nor the Church, in the United States Senate than does his colleague, George Sutherland, who is not of our faith and Church."

"Let me say further than that," said President Smith, growing more and more emphatic, "to you and to the country, that Thomas Kearns, former Senator from Utah, and now active in this crusade against the church, has come to me to use my influence with Senator Smoot to get him to resign his seat in the Senate, and that I have invariably told him that I had nothing whatever to do with Smoot's election. I did not help to put him in the senate, I am not in politics, and I

will not be led nor driven into politics. The Republican party of Utah elected Reed Smoot to the Senate, and is responsible for his being there. I am not, nor is the Church. I will also add that, while pleading with me to get Reed Smoot to resign, Mr. Kearns also pleaded with me to help him to be elected to succeed himself, and that to both pleas I made the same answer, 'I am not in politics, and will not be led into politics.'"

This is the answer, made by the highest officer of the "Mormon" Church, to the charge that Reed Smoot, one of the Twelve Apostles, was elected to the United States Senate by and through their influence and dictation.

"And let me say something on that point," volunteered Apostle George A. Smith, son of Apostle John Henry Smith, a prominent man in the Church—father and son being both members of the apostolate—who had entered the room while the foregoing statements were being made. "When Reed Smoot was a candidate for the Senate, the Kearns people right here in our convention in Salt Lake county, united with the Smoot forces to nominate candidates for the Legislature against the Sutherland forces. It was a 'Mormon' Gentile combination against another 'Mormon' Gentile combination, for the Republicans were divided between the two candidates without regard to church affiliations. I am a Republican and have been since boyhood, and I am a Federal officeholder, appointed by President McKinley. I have stumped every corner of Utah for the Republican cause, and no official in the Church has ever hinted to me, let alone dictated, what should be my political course—not even my own father."

"It should be said, in this connection," remarked President Smith, "that this stumping was done by Brother Smith before he became an Apostle. He was only recently appointed to that office."

"While Reed Smoot is an Apostle," said Apostle Penrose, "there is nothing in that fact incompatible with his holding any civil office. Nor, while there has been as much ground for it as there is in his case, has the objection made to him ever been raised before. He is not the first Apostle elected to Congress. George Q. Cannon, who was an Apostle and counselor to Presidents Taylor, Woodruff and Snow, served several terms in Con-